

# Naval War College Review

---

Volume 21  
Number 5 May

Article 19

---

1968

## Hitler's Last Gamble

A. V. Rinearson III  
*U.S. Army*

Jacques Nobécourt

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Rinearson, A. V. III and Nobécourt, Jacques (1968) "Hitler's Last Gamble," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 21 : No. 5 , Article 19.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol21/iss5/19>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

Foreword, the purpose of the book is to describe the political and military background of the Berlin Wall and its implications. It traces the important events related to the Berlin problem from the London Protocol of 1944 to the present. It deals with the roots of the Berlin issues, the four-power control of the city, the Allied airlift, the dividing wall, conditions in East Berlin, Soviet aims in Berlin, and the free world's stake in the controversy. The book is written in a straightforward, clear, and uncomplicated style. It is especially well documented, with much of the material having been obtained from Government historical records, U.S. Department of State sources, and the files of the German Government. Some 14 appendices citing the full texts of, or pertinent excerpts from, official statements, protocols, and agreements discussed in the narrative have been included, along with numerous charts and illustrations to assist the reader. Following review and analysis of significant historical events, the author argues that it would be a mistake to underestimate the significance and impact of the Wall. Annexation of East Berlin closed the last gap in the barbed wire fence stretching from Lubeck in the north to Hof in the south, and made it possible for Ulbricht to disregard the feelings of the imprisoned Germans and put his program of Bolshevism into effect. While Ulbricht's psychological position is about the same as it was over a decade ago, his Communist state is enjoying the nearest thing to a boom yet seen in the Communist world. Whether or not the Wall has strengthened or weakened the spirit of West Berliners is uncertain. The majority know that they will have to live with it but can never cease to cry out against it and to hope that someday, somehow, the monstrous creation must come down. From the Soviet Government's point of view, the question of Berlin's status is an immediate issue, but not the

real issue. It is only one step in the Communist plan for world domination. Before the Wall, West Berlin was a showcase for Western technology and an escape channel for millions of inhabitants of the East sector and Eastern Zone. Today it is but a lonely light-house of freedom in a dark totalitarian sea. Furthermore, Moscow is acutely aware that the potentialities inherent in the integration of West European nations are tremendous, and without the Federal Republic, European integration would be impossible. Therefore, the Federal Republic has become the primary target of Soviet political maneuvers in Berlin. Actually, what the West is being asked to acknowledge in Berlin is an agreement with Russia to partition all of Germany into three separate parts: the Federal Republic, the Soviet Zone, and the "free city" of West Berlin. A separate peace treaty could then be made between the U.S.S.R. and its German satellite. Finally, the author concludes that if the Communists did not push their ideological world domination program, there would be no Wall and no Berlin crises. The Wall, he believes, stands as a hideous monument to Communist failure because it was built, not to protect the East German people from their enemies, but to keep them forcibly confined in a state of totalitarian captivity. Aside from this argument, or thesis, of the writer, the book offers little that is new in its historical review of events but is an excellent reference source for the study and review of events pertinent to the very volatile and important German issues today.

J.G. BONIFACE  
Captain, U.S. Navy

Nobécourt, Jacques. *Hitler's Last Gamble*. New York: Schocken Books, 1967. 302 p.

Published in France in 1962 under the title of *Le Dernier Coup de Dés de Hitler*, this book is the result of a

suggestion to the author that he "tell the story of Bastogne" on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the so-called "Rundstedt offensive." In pursuing his purpose, Jacques Nobécourt became convinced, despite the publicity and fame given to the siege of Bastogne, that the Ardennes offensive, as a military operation, was "in fact little more than an incident in the war." However, "its political repercussions, both on the German and on the Allied side, were greater than those of any other single operation of the war." This book, therefore, is not an account of the progress of the battle, describing the maneuver and combat of military units on the battlefield. The story of the battle seems almost coincidental to the far more interesting events which take place some distance from the scenes of conflict—the political maneuvering and decisions that influenced the course of the engagement more than one might imagine. As the author puts it, "the Ardennes was an effect, not a cause."

The political/military relationships are particularly well covered in three areas: (1) On the German side, where conflicting courses of action arise out of the desperation of a nation faced with the impending loss of a war and the demand for "unconditional surrender"; where a "double or nothing" gamble is insisted on by Hitler in hopes of salvaging one final victory and restoring the fast-crumbling morale of the German people; and where distrust, selfishness, and confusion dominate political/military relationships. (2) On the Allied side in the West where Eisenhower faces continual conflicts between his major commanders, magnified by bitter articles in the American and British press; and where political direction is dependent on less than perfect cooperation between an energetic Churchill, a tired and hesitant Roosevelt, and an overly sensitive, temperamental De Gaulle. (3) On the overall relationship between the Allies in the West and

Soviet Russia. Here the author shows how events that occurred during the Ardennes offensive served to put Stalin in the driver's seat at Yalta, with far-reaching and serious repercussions.

Jacques Nobécourt proves himself to be an excellent historian and writer. He is often highly critical, but unlike a number of his French contemporaries, gives a fair appraisal of the opposing viewpoint and does not hesitate to give ample credit for decisions well made. This book is strongly recommended for the student of political/military relationships.

A.V. RINEARSON, III  
Colonel, U.S. Army

Nutting, Anthony. *No End of a Lesson*. London: Constable, 1967. 205 p.

Anthony Nutting resigned his post as British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs during the 1956 Suez Crisis in protest over the actions being taken by Her Majesty's Government. He waited 10 years before telling his story. His reason for this long delay is that he felt it would be a grave disservice to his country to give his behind-the-scenes version of the affair while other principals still held high public office. Naturally, the author wants to justify his own position and actions. His apparent sudden break from his colleagues and the Conservative Party he had served for many years caused criticism and charges of disloyalty. He had been closely associated with Anthony Eden during the periods when Eden was serving as Foreign Secretary, so Nutting's resignation from Eden's Cabinet brought allegations of betrayal of his leader and patron. However, in telling his story, perhaps because time has supported his position, Nutting does not overplay his self-justification. He is critical of Prime Minister Eden and blames Britain's participation in what Nutting considers the nation's most shameful debacle of modern times on Eden's obsession to